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OUTPOSTS

11

Poems by:	*Page*
JAMES KIRKUP	1
ERNEST FROST	2
PAUL DEHN	3
MURIEL SPARK	3
JOHN WALLER	4
NORMAN NICHOLSON	4
GEORGE MOOR	5
ROSS NICHOLS	6
JOSEPH JOEL KEITH	6
C. BUSBY SMITH	7
BRIAN A. ROWLEY	8
LIONEL MONTEITH	8
VERNON WATKINS	9
IRIS BIRTWISTLE	10
MICHAEL REDGROVE	10
SYLVIA READ	11

DEREK STANFORD — Movements in the Mirror: Surrealism — 12

GEORGE WOODCOCK — The Poems of Kenneth Rexroth — 14

Book Reviews by:

LIONEL MONTEITH, ELIZABETH BRYANT, ALEC SMITH and the Editor — 18-21

JAMES KIRKUP

The Beachcomber

NOW the pale sands' long, light autumn emptiness
lies bright with narrow pools of sun and sea :
blue backwaters in the low, mysterious dunes,
or shallow ocean-parallels, calm troughs of brine
in waves of sand, or deep aquaria in stranded rocks.

In the brief sun-sleep of the half-warm morning
bleach the drawn-up boats, with pointed prow
and curves of white or faded blue, worn rowlocks,
rope-lashed oars. The rusty baling-can
beneath the bare plank seats is tilted vacantly

with silence, broken shells, a finger-breadth of sand.
And here, among the phantom nets and sails, the ghosts
of summer fishermen and shouting boys, another ghost
in dark clothes wanders, bent and slow, dwarfed
by his own solitude, and the ocean's leaning skies.

He wanders down the empty miles of sand and shore,
pausing, stooping, stumbling on buried stones.
Lonely, as if in an agony of dumb regret
his figure trails among the relics, shells
and broken playthings of a world gone far away.

His eyes are fixed upon the ground that moves.
His eyes, as in a long dream, ache to seize
some wonder, some last glittering remembrancer,
token of life or love or human happiness, some
real word scrawled on a shred of paper, rags for wounds,

a talisman or scrap of golden wreckage, garland
cast away by sailors careless on a southern sea.
His hunger itches for the wink of half-hid treasure,
for a child's lost penny in this northern emptiness ;
but day by day there is not any, never proof

for hope, nor comfort for the unutterable fears.
He wanders, into the mounting ocean of the year's
deep, snowy end, with dark and emptiness on every hand,
crazed, seeking eyes ablaze with hope at each
grain of sand that like a diamond mocks and glitters

but turns dull with touching : intangible, as out of reach
as an invisible horizon, as far beyond the clutch
of these numbed fingers and despairing hands
as sailors climbing in the summer's rigging,
and the buried El Dorado in his mind's bare northern sands.

ERNEST FROST

The Connecting Heart

In Memory of Bela Bartok

HIS tongues had found connection in the end
after long struggle. They had found
more than the rising lark, but the frail bone
compelling it, and the deep shadow where it rose
receiving, tenuous as feathers, its far canticle.

Cliffs of his villages with birds and minerals
consorted at his glance. He wore like gloves
their many-peopled heart. His tongues had found
connection in the end, whence they could start
to wrench his music from a secret art.

After long struggle he became this end—
the cock's insistent call at four o'clock, the stems
of wineglass hawthorn bearing ample veins
of a loved looking and believing. He became
what the skull listens for inside the dream.

He had believed the wholeness and he saw
the manifold made singular and pure ;
strange cities in his mind tore down the stars
and these cold cities and their colder eyes
found the connecting heart. His tongues descried

this gift which pours our many-purposed world
into one leavening bread. From this he caused
cruel notes like broken lyres
and from his utmost torment there impelled
a levitation weightless as a cloud.

PAUL DEHN

Thames Embankment

DUSK is another place and another time
Whose children play like moths about a street-lamp
Under lit leaves ; when the processional river
Is all rivers under the risen moon
And the moon is a penny, a piastre or a dime.

Night is another time and another place
Where buses, mounting the invisible bridge,
Curve in the sky like comets ; and a 'plane,
Starred among stars, is its own constellation,
The Fish, the Dolphin, nosing into space.

Time is another dusk and other nights
When the blood's river and the mind's children
Promised fertility. So must I wait
(Who have been here, and there, and now am nowhere)
Till the light, leaving the water, leaves only the lights.

MURIEL SPARK

Lost Lover

NOW she will come to calculate her lost
lover by the distant sails, remembering
his song as the name of all men lost to her,

thinking of the Achilles she once dipped
frail in the magic of her river, but never
more from her woman's pity to suckle him,

never to crouch within his rocking skull
nor spring in his time like Pallas for her lover;
his lost brow shall not father her again

and she shall ride no Hellespont to sister
his Phryxus through the air, who lies forbidding
the sea anemones to breathe his name.

O he has taken the red-sailed ship and raised
anchor from her Penelope and singing
set course for Scylla in the alien waters.

JOHN WALLER

When Sadness Fills a Journey

WHEN sadness fills a journey
There is no last remorse
Between accepted ending
And the final turn we pass
To other sights or heroes
Or hunger in the cold
Fine air of morning sadness
Where all limbs must grow old.

So now I wear your picture
Against my heart for love
And know that you will wander
Across no lonely path,
But as a brighter darling,
A warm guest for the night,
Cry still : " My dearest favour
Is not so easily caught."

You, as the hour's enchanter,
Made circles as you would,
Posing a tricky charmer
Uncharmed but not withstood,
So wear this song for parting,
A gay song for the day
When limbs and charm and favour
Are warm but worn away.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Scarf Gap, Buttermere

THERE is no need to describe the track ; a pencil
Drawn diagonally across a slate
Would be more precise than words. The stone walls
Lay ladders of grey against the green ; the green
Glissades into the lake.
This pass is known, defined and understood
Not by the eyes but by the feet,
The feet of men and sheep that tread it :—the young
Teacher from Cleator Moor, pushing a bike

With a burnish of poetry on the rims ;
The girl who is soon to bear a foreigner's child ;
The lad who leaves the pit shafts of the Solway
To grope for a brighter fire than coal.
These, in the shock and shuffle of the world,
Are shunted along strange, disordered rails,
To crash on viaducts or into buffers
Or sink in sidings where the bindweed lies on the lines.
That world they rejected once, perhaps once only,
And scrambled up the screes of the slithering moment
To seek a combe unquarried yet by change,
Where memory, returning with the wheatear,
Could find the name scratched on the same stone.
Therefore to them this dale, this pass,
This double queue of hills, High Stile and Melbreak,
Robinson, Grassmoor and Hobcarton Fell,
(Themselves the wrack and backwash
Of the geological tides) seen now
More lasting memorial than the rubble of cities—
A track that the wild Herdwicks still will tread
Long after the trackmakers all are dead.

GEORGE MOOR

Easter on Hameldown, Dartmoor

EASTER on Hameldown! where they once trod
Whose buried kings direct me through the moors.
Grey fleeing winds and clouds like locks of God,
For this world was and is forever Thor's.
Nothing has changed ; the very houses stand,
Walled circles, where the fire died yesterday
Within the blackened stones. It is their land,
These moors, and hills like seals' backs far away.

A red fox shakes like fire down the hill ;
No use for us, this waste of rocks and mist
Where Easter keeps the older meaning still ;
Where only wind-maned ponies hinnying shrill
And prisoners in stiff grey clothes exist,
And conscript soldiers practising to kill.

ROSS NICHOLS

From Incantations of the Horse

SACRIFICE of the black horse :
his head is enormous, his eyes and his mouth are flames,
he rises over me, and I am within him.
Through the great ribs of the horse I see country, white steeples
and sky ;
he flies on with his huge neck arching far above me.
Still are his nostrils red and he paws the clouds of the air
and as it were a black cloak billows below and behind him.

The black horse carries me with immense desire,
energy aspirant along the winds ; he feeds upon pasture not human,
he undulates softly upon his course. He grows ever larger
and now his fiery eye is the sun and his snorting breath is as the wind,
his four limbs the four seasons, and he
is one of the mystic quadriga of God which is Time.
He rose from the sea, his cradle, and shall sink there again,
the giant horse, the dark horse of the cosmic desire
fathered by the leviathan who is the desire of God
coasting and questing the waters.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

The Mirrors of Learning (for Gabriela Mistral)

THOUGH she sat,
in humility,
wearing the laurels of greatness ;
though her fingers,
long and untiring,
wrote the high letters,
the white letters of justice,
the low soft language of mercy,
the eloquent still voice
of love,
I will remember,
always,
her eyes looking downward
and I will remember

the nations of children,
their eyes looking up,
seeing in the eyes of the Senorita
a living language,
blessing not one, but all,
as the wheat of the field blesses all
who hunger,
as the sun of heavens
blesses the children of earth.

C. BUSBY SMITH

Phoenix

WITH April on his tongue and a green word
singing at his ear and all the spidery air
threading his arms with light, drawing him out of doors,
he went out in Spring to search for the bright lair
of that phoenix bird whose shrilling cry is heard
in the burst of a strange season. The sun on the moors

lured him on through a salt and desolate marsh
silent and intimidating ; a lowland depression
settled momently on him till the sun's dazzling crystal
shattered on a sheet of water ; like a gaudy procession
of gay banners and trumpets the feverish light and harsh
contours of rock shimmered ; suddenly a kestrel

swung low over the lake, then calling, swirved up the bright
radiance of the sun's road and rode on the light air
to the far side of the water, sad and grey as tears ;
the light dimmed and where the kestrel perched he saw the rare
phoenix bird of his quest like a red peony stabbing his sight,
dazzling through the darkness. At once the fears

that had grown like raven's plumes, festering blackly on him
fell to the burgeoning earth. The water rippled
in steel rings as his heron-legs spiked through its cold.
Then he crossed over between light and light ; and stippled
with jewels of blood he swung his feet to the rim
and on that ledge where his phoenix nested, rolled.

There fainting among dark twigs his panting breath
scarce ruffled the gleaming feathers of that bright death.

BRIAN A. ROWLEY

Observer

NO poem's pain can penetrate my power.
My hands lie easy by your lovers' side.
Authentic oracles had fixed my hour
without compulsion of your curious pride.

And now like morning or the simple stars
no more your face is wonder or a dream
but bone set brazenly. Why then I'll parse
some sentence from this silence you convene

and imitate the peasant at his plough,
whose love lies easy into long grass days ;
I'll watch the changing seasons of your face,
and in your winter, if my years allow,
I'll stand beside the huntsman on the hill
and hold my sorrow silent at the kill.

LIONEL MONTEITH

The Symbol of the Bud

THE third time now, to make you mine—
where is the bud
that shall be my sign ?

For twice in the morning wind you stood,
in the barren acre
that disturbs my blood.

And twice you looked at the flowering thorn
from the cloisters of the mind
where silence is born.

But you turned away from the fire of the bloom—
from the fear of the woman
in the curtained room,

and you saw in the glass of the mirror-pooled thought
the love of leaves
that another might distort.

So, far from me on my child-church hill,
you gathered your straws
in the wind, until

the world was a castle of gold,
defending heart's warmth—
or intimate cold :

a defence against the traveller lost in night,
or the flowering thorn—
or the womanly plight.

But as long as there remains an acre by the wood
I shall look for your features
in the symbol of the bud.

VERNON WATKINS

Hymn (for a Thanksgiving)

SHINE, risen Christ, whose face we love :
The leper, healed, gives thanks to Thee.
His eyes are fixed, and will not move
From that clear spring that makes him see.

He heard Thy words, then turned his feet ;
He passed the jealous, pressing crowd.
His fingers touched the watery sheet.
He found Thee there, and cried aloud.

The lost reward was not denied
To one for whom no men gave place.
They who pressed nearest in their pride
Were not the first to see Thy face.

Gently, O gently sings the dove.
The washed eyes look on hill and field.
Shine, risen Christ, give us the love
A touch transfigured and revealed.

IRIS BIRTWISTLE

This Questing Flesh

SOME grow a restless flesh
Impatient for mountains,
Welcome burning stone where
Blood sparks indifferent
Feet and scatters the blue
Limb with scarlet flowers.
Some hear in spring's swinging
Bud the goat-bell calling.

Some fish for old desire
Haunting black rivers with
Dim lantern, seeking the
Lost Ophelia's love, moon
Floating image of drowned
Stars in a weed-framed face.

MICHAEL REDGROVE

Ravel's 'Bolero'

SUBTLE fingers tapping the taut drums
that are tensioned nerve and
stroking the vibrant strings while the drum-beats quicken—
strings that stretch between heart and loins and the phallic moon
while the drum-beats quicken
pacing, pacing like panthers, like panthers leaping—
O the ineluctable drum-beats, deepening
like the hammers of doom!
Hungry fingers stroking tense loins
rousing out of sleep's stupor the wolves of passion—
ah, wanton mouth and the wild beasts surging
while drum-beats quicken!
Drums, O drums in the night, in the terrible African night and
cruel fingers plucking nerve-strings,
hot palms flailing the drums, the
cosmic drums filling earth and sky, filling hell and heaven and hate
waking the boom of the deep drums, drowning
light and reason in frenzy of gongs and the
conches' screaming . . . . . .

SYLVIA READ

Avalon

NOW Avalon is here, and the enchanted land
More tangible than dreams. The sea winds blow,
And echoing under the sea the submerged trees
Wave with the billowing water pressed by the wind.

Under the heart is Avalon, whose music strays
Through strings of a lover's senses, which touch plays
Music beyond the lips, beyond the body's core.
Trumpets and bells cry out at the city's gate.

Now Avalon is open like a flower;
The days lean back with the bending of the lilies,
The hours draw scent, like stamens into the air
And calyx night shutters its naked limbs.

I knew you by this flower, this land you hold,
Your eyes the sea washing its faery shores,
Your hands the wall of the city, your heart its sun
Warm for a thousand years lighting my moon.

This is not London here, nor I alone,
I have no part in this room, in the phantom days
That creep and gibber, tell me you are gone.
I came by other times and other ways

In paths unseen, in histories unwritten.
With you in space, no space is but the land
Calling and haunting, drawing us to its breast,
To Avalon whose flower shines like a flame.

MOVEMENTS IN THE MIRROR: SURREALISM

DEREK STANFORD

"THE WORLD is deep, and deeper than the day thinks it." So wrote Nietzsche some fifty years ago, and upon this belief that commonsense is only a very superficial kind of sense the Surrealists have painted, written, and lived. Before considering their movement, however, a word must be said on its origins, which are, in number, briefly three.

Its immediate parent was the tendency known in France by the name of Dada and first manifested in 1915. A by-product of the Great War, it was born of the same spirit of destruction; a kind of nihilism carried over into art. How can the ruling classes, it asked, which plunged us into this hecatomb pretend to believe in the dignity of man; in the values of beauty, goodness and truth?

Thus was bred a hatred for the arts as the suspect play-time property of tyrants, the leisure-icons of the idle rich. So deep was the disgust, David Gascoyne tells us, which a masterpiece inspired in one of this school "that he invented a form of expression, which he called 'Ready-Made.'" A Ready-Made was any manufactured object that the artist liked to choose. For instance, in 1917 he sent in to the New York Salon des Independants a simple marble lavatory-bowl which he entitled *Fountain*, signing it 'R. Mutt.'

In this fashion Dada gave the raspberry to art and to all the standards of Western culture. To live without values, however, is to initial one's own death warrant, and this was precisely what Dada did. In it we see the spectacle of art committing suicide, and many of its followers actually took their own lives.

The second element in the make-up of Surrealism was the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. According to him the subconscious mind was the source of all our thoughts and actions; an underground river hidden from the day but coming to the surface in reverie and dreams.

The third and final current of thought going to form Surrealism was the philosophy of Karl Marx, known as Historical Materialism. In a way that suggests a parallel with Freud, Marx maintained that society is not controlled and shaped by the powers "on view"—by religion, culture, and law, etc.—but by an invisible economic mainspring wound by the forces of production and consumption. Sooner or later, Marx explained, when Capital exploited Labour too far, the pressure on the spring would cause it to break, and a new society would arise where the underdog would at last have his day.

In the year 1924 an astonished France saw the publication of the first Surrealist Manifesto. The word 'surrealist' had already been used by the poet Apollinaire in 1917, implying a vision of reality beyond that of the 'daylight' reason; the appearance which the world would have seen through the telescope of imagination. A good deal more than powerful focus was meant when this new group employed the term. Society is insane, they cried. We will pay it back in its own coin. Nor was their premise easily denied in a world where corn used to rot in the fields, where fish were tipped back into the sea, and coffee burnt as locomotive fuel because the prices of the market were more important than feeding hungry men. Surrealism, then, is the angry retort of the artist to all the nonsense around him; a substitution of poetic nonsense for the non-poetic nonsense of a money-pulled world.

With the Dada movement this retort had remained a kind of despairing abuse, an unbelieving black humour ('Umor' as M. Vache spelt it), a final and negative *So What*! Siding with Labour in its war against Capital, the Surrealists could not stop short here. If Dada had been a revolt of cynics, surrealism was Dada gone social-minded, ready to prove itself a friend of the Left.

This it attempted by the comprehensive derangement of consciousness and speech. The world of words, these artists argued, reflects and expresses the world of matter. Now in this latter territory the Man of Property reigns supreme. He who assists in the breaking-up of language helps therefore to weaken the powers of wealth. He plays the role of saboteur by wrecking conventional trains of thought.

The best means to this purpose was discovered in the technique of automatic writing; a mode of composition by the subconscious mind. Here, by sending the conscious brain to sleep, contact is established with deeper levels of being. By listening to the voice that rises from the darkness, from the great reservoirs of fantasy and dream, from the vats of primitive fears and desires the surrealist hopes to gain more knowledge; to delve a little deeper in the mystery of man.

Now a certain amount of communication between the different strata of the mind is a common feature of our everyday thought; especially in moments of excited high feeling. In a similar way in literature and art the peculiar accent of the subconscious is heard in passages describing great emotion; an italics reserved for exaltation or despair. Examples of this are plentiful enough. Both Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear* contain these stark demented truths, convulsively spoken confessionals, reason uttered in the mind's despite. But whereas the literature of the past indulged in this pro-

cess sparingly, Surrealism would use no other, acting as if delirium was the normal condition of being. So it occurred that André Breton, leader of the French movement and sometime Army psychiatrist, defined it in the following words : " Thought's dictation in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations."

The great deficiency of this principle as an artistic recipe is its denial of the formal claims of art. All that comes glittering from the dark subconscious weir is not ready-minted aesthetic gold. It requires the deliberate shaping touch, and this the Surrealists refuse to bestow. Truth to the testament of the wandering fancy, for them, is more important than an eye to form.

In 1936 the Surrealists held their London Exhibition, and a group was founded over here. Its effect on English art has been very slender, though, when we consider that two of the greatest modern French poets, Pierre Reverdy and Pierre Jean Jouve, and the Spanish poets, Lorca and Alberti, were profoundly influenced by it.

For a short period these poetics of a hypnotist exercised a certain attraction. Charles Madge, Francis Scarfe, and David Gascoyne all testified to its Walpurgis spell. England, however, has no Paul Eluard. Its monuments, here, are its by-products.

Of these, the most significant are the work of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas and the movement known as the Neo-Apocalypse. Born out of a brilliant compromise between Surrealism and our own romantic tradition they form the subject of a third essay. Planted in British soil the lily of France became a rose.

THE POEMS OF KENNETH REXROTH

GEORGE WOODCOCK

WE HAVE heard much of the poets of the European resistance, men who took an active part in and were the singers of movements of national resurgence under the Nazi occupation. But this was not the only form of resistance which took place during the war ; there was also the resistance to the idea of war itself, which was maintained by men in all countries who had a vision that went beyond mere national ends to the concept of human brotherhood. I do not wish in the present article to justify this attitude, but merely to point out that it also has been supported by some important poets, who, unhappily, have not received the praise given to Aragon or Eluard.

In America, particularly, the movement of war resistance contained a group of very talented young poets ; Patchen, Everson, Lamantia, Robert Duncan, are among those who have written really

eloquently against the corruption of a society that destroys human brotherhood. But, to me, the most mature and interesting of this circle of revolutionary poets (their work is hardly sufficiently close to call them a group) is Kenneth Rexroth.

Rexroth is a man of the borderline generation—just old enough to have some definite recollections of European and American society before the first world war. He was brought up in American radical circles. Debs, the great register of 1916–18, was a friend of his family, and in his youth he was closely associated with the American anarchist movement—a connection he has maintained actively ever since.

Rexroth emerged as an important poet in the 1930's and, after being published in most of the avant-garde and radical magazines, brought out a first book of verse, *In What Hour*, in 1940. This collection already represented a mature advance on his earlier experimental writings (he was one of the founders of the Objectivist school), and his second book, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1944), went forward to the technical competency and a music of verse which are, in my opinion, unrivalled among modern American poets.

The poems that comprise the earlier book show an amazing stylistic versatility. There is vivid, almost pyrotechnic, dissociated writing like *Easy Lessons in Geophagy*:

> "I passed the black fountain
> I passed the swathed man
> I passed the tireless mice
> I passed the long shark of the dawn
> I passed the multitude of gelid eardrums
> There are no teeth in most orchids
> The bas-relief tilts in the wall
> Flowers explode beneath the feet of the horses
> And the earthquake announces its genesis by
> whistling in the thermometers, and
> Announces its approach by obscuring the pulsations
> of the flowers
> The earthquake speaks gently and distinctly in a
> foreign language."

This kind of writing is revolutionary in an irrational yet deliberate manner—it uses a technique of dissolving ideas which is more effective than the surrealist abandonment to theoretically unconscious urges. It breaks up the usual concepts, the usual associations, presents us with new combinations, and forces us into a non-acceptance of the necessity of the world as it appears.

But in this first book there is also much that is revolutionary in a very direct—almost a didactic manner, and conveys in monumental terms the disgust of a sensitive and honest man with a corrupt world. There are several poems of this kind, but perhaps the most impressive is his *Requiem for the Spanish Dead*, which speaks of the tragic struggle with the restraint of supreme pity. The last verses are a particularly beautiful expression of thoughts developed so much more awkwardly by the 1930's English poets who wrote on Spain :

" I see the unwritten books, the unrecorded experiments,
The unpainted pictures, the interrupted lives,
Lowered into the graves with the red flags over them.
I see the quick gray brains broken and clotted with blood,
Lowered each in its own darkness, useless in the earth.
Alone on a hilltop in San Francisco suddenly
I am caught in a nightmare, the dead flesh
Mounting over half the world presses against me.

Then quietly at first and then rich and full-bodied,
I hear the voice of a young woman singing.
The emigrants on the corner are holding
A wake for their oldest-child, a driverless truck
Broke away on the steep hill and killed him,
Voice after voice adds itself to the singing.
Orion moves westward across the meridian,
Rigel, Bellatrix, Betelgeuse, marching in order,
The great nebula glimmering in his loins."

Beyond these concerns with literary experiment and social distress lies yet another and deeper aspect of Rexroth's poetry, his feeling for natural beauty, expressed actively in his passion for mountain climbing. It is in some of the poems of mountains that his verse reaches its highest sensitivity, and conveys at the same time a deep philosophical realisation of the unity of life. *In What Hour* contains many of these poems, but the following example from *The Phoenix and the Tortoise*, called *Another Spring*, seems to me in its compact and sensitive vigour one of the best poems of its kind that have been writen in our age. I reproduce it in full, as only this can give a whole idea of its real quality and completeness :

" The seasons revolve and the years change
With no assistance or supervision.
The moon, without taking thought,
Moves in its cycle, full, crescent, and full.

The white moon enters the heart of the river ;
The air is drugged with azalea blossoms ;
Deep in the night a pine cone falls ;
Our campfire dies out in the empty mountains.

The sharp stars flicker in the tremulous branches ;
The lake is black, bottomless in the crystalline night ;
High in the sky the Northern Crown
Is cut in half by the dim summit of a snow peak.

O heart, heart, so singularly
Intransigent and corruptible,
Here we lie entranced by the starlit water,
And moments that should each last forever

Slide unconsciously by us like water."

In *The Phoenix and the Tortoise*, the longest poem in that volume, the mystical view of the natural world is carried on to a deeper, more rational philosophy, impregnated with anarchist conceptions of behaviour and a personal vision of freedom and love that verges on the apocalyptic. Variations on this theme reach the precision of detailed knowledge in a series of shorter poems and adapted classical epigrams that accompany it. All the poems are distinguished by an enhanced erudition and understanding, and a philosophic serentiy that is expressed in Rexroth's introductory words : " I have tried to embody in verse the belief, that the only valid conservation of value lies in the assumption of unlimited liability, the supernatural identification of the self with the tragic unity of creative process. I hope I have made it clear that I do not believe that the Self does this by an act of Will, by sheer assertion. He who would save his life must lose it."

In this long poem the philosophical theme runs in a closely woven strand of thought that leads steadily to the final statement of the poet's conclusions :

" Value, causality, being,
Are reducible to the purest
Act, the self-determining person,
He who discriminates structures
In contingency, he who assumes
All the responsibility
Of ordered, focused, potential—
Sustained by all the universe,
Focusing the universe in act—
The person, the absolute price,
The only blood defiance of doom."

Rexroth has attained a philosophical detachment from an evil world, and he has done this partly by isolating himself from some of its manifestations, and particularly by cutting completely adrift from the more corrupt social and literary circles in modern America, where his ability and integrity are admired by a small but discriminating group of readers. But he has never hidden in an ivory tower of social unawareness. On the contrary, he is one of the few authors in our day who have successfully solved the problem of assimilating a social conscience into their poetry without spoiling it in the process. He combines philosophic serenity with the indignation of a truly revolutionary thinker, yet at the same time remains a sensitive and technically powerful poet, one of the few American poets who speak in so universal a manner that they have a great deal to communicate to English readers and writers. For this reason it is unfortunate that he is less appreciated in this country than many inferior American writers, whose vehemence is often almost all they have to set against his excellent craftsmanship and genuinely powerful insight.

REVIEWS.

The Strait of Anian : Earle Birney (Ryerson Press, Toronto, $2.50).
A Cornish Gleaning : Bernard Moore (Peter Ratazzi 2s. 6d.).
Fire Among the Ruins : Stuart Piggott (Oxford University Press, 5s. od.).

LIKE politicians and religionists, poetry critics must have their fun and in the temporary absence of other controversies Internationalism versus Regionalism is set fair to provide it. The Internationalists insist that the boundaries of poetry lie at the horizons of the mind, and the Regionalists assert as strongly that the regional culture in which a poet has his being provides the basis of his contribution to world poetry.

Now Dr. Birney's latest book seems to me an admirable demonstration of the fact that both of these views are not merely true, but actually complementary. Here is a poet with a world view, and yet his work is an unmistakable expression of the human, cultural and geographical individualism of his rugged and virile country. From Pacific to Atlantic he draws upon the powerful imagery of Canada's wild and gigantean terrain, and catches in his rhythms the mood and toughness of its people. His success in conveying this mood, this atmosphere, derives not a little from the close approximation to true speech rhythms which he employs—a method that remains effective even for the non-Canadian reader. The book's first section, *One Society*, is centred mainly upon the poet's native Canada and most of the poems reveal the extent to which particular places or cities occupy the forefront of his consciousness. In *David*, a moving narrative poem of simple and direct approach, Dr. Birney shows his ability to tackle the longer form successfully, but his craftsmanship and technical facility are less evident here than in most of the other poems.

The second section of the book, *One World*, is more reflective of Europe and its problems and we recognise, at once, many elements familiar to English thought: *VE-Night* in Vauxhall Bridge Road, *Lines for Peace*, or conjecture about *World War* III. In these poems there is a note of cynicism—but although the final poem is enigmatic, the poet reaches his real climactic in these lines:

> "O we may yet roar free, unwhirl,
> sweeping great waves into the deepening bores,
> bringing the ocean to boom and fountain and siren,
> tumbling the fearful clouds into a great sky wallowing,
> cracking the mountain apart—
> the great wind of humanity blowing free, blowing through,
> streaming over the future."

Mr. Bernard Moore is, I imagine, as jovial a tramping companion as one would wish for, and his jogging verses will doubtless stir many a Cornish heart: unfortunately I hail from Sussex. Which reminds me that the parochial outlook is no substitute for regional culture.

Fire Among the Ruins reflects, once again, the wartime and post-war bewildered disillusionment of the discarded soldier. Mr. Piggott moves among the ruins muttering such words of Mr. Eliot's as he can remember, and the fact that he has read widely and assimilated

only partially the work of other poets does not help at all. Nonetheless, this poet occasionally shows real craftsmanship, and if he would take his material from the substance of life rather than books I feel that his second volume might contain some worthwhile surprises.

LIONEL MONTEITH.

The Hearth Lit: Joseph Joel Keith (Dierkes Press, $2.00).
Always the Need: Joseph Joel Keith (Dierkes Press, $2.00).

"JOY and love—" writes David Morton in his introduction to *The Hearth Lit*, "which, finally, I suppose, are the sources and benediction of art, as they are of life—are consistently present in Joel Keith's poems." Whether one agrees with Mr. Morton about the 'benediction of art' or not, there is no doubt that the second part of his statement is true. Mr. Keith, a sensitive poet whose technically traditional leanings have been little influenced by American modernism, finds warm inspiration in the unsordid delights of simple human relationships, and in the poised felicity of nature. Unlike so many poems which have been written about nature, those by Mr. Keith bear the obvious stamp of personal observation and personal curiosity or wonder. He gives "my ripest word, holding you sunward . . ." to the brown child gripping the "prized fat berry . ." in his bleeding fingers; of the young girl weeping, he says "Do not intrude, or laugh, or call her fool . . ."—and one cannot but feel that this poet has never quite lost the bright expectancies and clear perceptions of childhood.

Always the Need is the story of a small boy, told in a sequence of forty sonnets. In a home made insecure by the disunity of husband and wife, the boy finds it impossible to resolve his conflicts and so runs away. This results in the suicide of his mother which is followed by an eventual rebirth of certainties and faith through his father's love and comradeship. Considering the poetic hazards which such a subject entails, Mr. Keith has made a favourable showing, but this sequence is certainly not the technical equal of his more versatile, lively, and imaginative shorter poems.

ELIZABETH BRYANT.

Apollinaire to Aragon: Trans. by W. J. Strachan (Methuen, 7s. 6d.)
The Ninth Wave: Geoffrey Johnson (Harrap, 6s. od.).
Chromatic Airs: A. J. Bull (unpriced).
Seasons at War: Ross Nichols (Forge Press, 3s. 6d.).

"MR. STRACHAN'S fine translations, collected in book form and introduced by his concise and stimulating essay on trends in modern French poetry, reach a high level of achievement; and the

space devoted to individual poets indicates a precise knowledge of their relative importance. There is not an insignificant name in the list, but to mention only Apollinaire, Derême, Carco, Supervielle, Eluard, de la Tour de Pin and Aragon will give the reader some idea of the scope of this collection. It is a special pleasure to me to find the 'fantaisistes' (that neglected group of writers) so well represented. The translations of Apollinaire's *Zone*, Carco's *The Shadow*, and Aragon's *More Beautiful than Tears* are masterpieces of the translator's art.

There is a fertility about Mr. Johnson's Muse that would make the least-carping critic suspicious of the apparent speed and ease with which he writes, but on examining his work one is constantly surprised by the merit it reveals. Admittedly, some of these lyrics are slight, but always the same elegance and taste informs his style, and there is abundant variety in his themes. A miniaturist by inclination, he has a consumate skill in recording the intimate and signnificant gestures of the living world around him.

Mr. Bull lacks staying power: his short poems are better than his long ones, and his epigrams best of all. He relies too often upon a metrical statement of the commonplace. Love is his most rewarding subject, but the general impression I gain from a reading of this book is one of monotony.

Mr. Nichols is a very uneven writer, and his strange inversions and archaisms are often stiff and naive in effect. His strongest poems have colour and control, and in his prose-chants the influence of Paul Fort is beneficial to his work.

ALEC SMITH.

Music for Statues: Derek Stanford (Routledge, 5s. od.).

THE TWO most outstanding features of Mr. Derek Stanford's first collection, *Music for Statues*, are the rich visual imagery he succeeds in compressing into almost all his poems and the air of mystery surrounding them. Mr. C. Day Lewis has recently pointed out that "... the strong-point, or 'hedgehog,' into which the main body of poetry has withdrawn is the image" and Mr. Stanford's work certainly provides a good example of this development. Perhaps he relies too much upon the incidental image as distinct from the total image of the poem for his personal strong-point, so that, occasionally, the ultimate effect of the whole poem is weakened. Even then, however, his originality is sufficient to retain the reader's interest. In his most successful poems, such as *The Statue in the Wood*, *Largesse*, *The Haunted Summer* and *The Women*, where the conception is equal to the execution, Mr. Stanford reveals his true potentialities.

HOWARD SERGEANT.